

AN ANIMATED SHORT FILM TITLED *RITE*

A CREATIVE PROJECT

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STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In my experience as an artist and filmmaker very few animated films represent the concept of losing a parent. Simply put, it is a hard subject and even more difficult to sell. Movies, especially animated ones, are supposed to make us feel happy or allow us to escape to a better place. Talking animals, princesses, adventures, and happy endings all make us feel good but they are not reflective of real life. While there are some animated films that do indeed deal with death, they often approach it from a “deus ex machina” lens where the ghost of the deceased will appear and “solve” the main character’s issues or the main character will travel to the afterlife to meet the deceased and together they will solve the film’s conflict. An excellent example of this is Disney’s *Coco*, where the main character literally travels to the afterlife to seek the help of his deceased ancestors (Fig.1). In *Coco*, the main character is a young boy named Miguel who accidentally travels to the Land of the Dead. During his time here, he meets his ghostly ancestors and rallies for their help against the film’s villain. Miguel finds strength to confront his personal troubles, but only through the support of his manifested ancestors.¹

These films are beautiful and close to my heart, but they represent wishful thinking. As far as we know, the prospect of traveling to the afterlife, some other ethereal realm or having the ghostly embodiment of your deceased loved one appear literally before you is slim to none. Thus, *Rite* will deal with these aspects of death in a much more subtle and realistic way. Instead

¹ *Coco*. Directed by Lee Unkrich. Produced by Darla K. Anderson. Screenplay by Adrian Molina and Matthew Aldrich. Performed by Anthony Gonzalez, and Gael Garcia Bernal. United States: Walt Disney Pictures - Pixar Animation Studios, 2017. Netflix. Accessed November 23, 2018.

of having the deceased appear before Rite's main characters, the audience will be presented with clues to determine for themselves if indeed the spirit of the deceased has made an appearance.

In addition, I want my film to show the raw emotion of what I felt when I lost my dad. That emotion was anger. I was twelve when my dad passed away of a cerebral aneurysm. He was forty-four. I remember visiting him in his last days at the hospital and feeling completely numb. The doctors informed my family that his brain had been critically damaged from internal bleeding and saving him was beyond reason. He was in a coma for a full weekend until my grandmother and my older brother signed the papers to have him removed from life support. He slipped away peacefully the morning of September 17th, 2005. In that moment I felt like I could take the world and tear it apart in my hands. Everything hurt, everything was raw. Life was unfair and cruel. The film's young protagonist, Sem II (named after his father Sem I) is an avatar of this emotional state. He is the embodiment of that very same youthful rage I felt because children are unable to understand the depth of such complex pain. Instead, they typically experience it as anger. Sem's anger is extremely clear. He does not want his father's position as chief and tribal leader, and he wants absolutely nothing to do with the world. Not because he is a bad kid, but because he is *hurting*.

In addition to the emotional hurt one experiences as a child in the wake of losing a parent, *Rite* explores the possibilities of emotional healing after that tragic loss. The film shows Sem acting out in anger and portrays him confronting his worst hurt by taking up his father's war helmet as a symbol of growing up and moving on. With the help of his mother, the wise Prophet Sinax, Sem will eventually overcome his hurt and start to heal.

The Prophet Sinax, Sem's mother and wife to the deceased Sem I, plays as the film's secondary protagonist. I see myself in Sinax and she embodies my current emotional state of

well-being. Her ambitions are high and due to this she pushes her son to accept his hurt on her terms, not his. This is a clear mistake on her part and a glaring flaw in her character. She knows her son is reeling from the loss of his father, but she is too impatient to let him experience it naturally. She wants him to grow up *now*, and while he eventually must face the devastation he feels in his heart, it must be done by his own spirit. This is not to paint Sinax in a bad light; in fact, Sinax loves her son deeply and acts as a guide and door opener for the young Sem. While she is not a perfect mother, she tries her best and has good intentions for her child. Both Sem and Sinx represent aspects of myself at two very different stages of emotion in my life. Ultimately, they must come together to face their current hardship and move gracefully on from the past.

I want my film to be a catalyst for healing and spiritual growth. I want to reach audiences who perhaps have experienced a loss as deep as mine and in turn relay a message of hope. There is healing after loss, and there is peace after someone so close to you passes on. It just takes that first step, and while it may be terrifying, it is so worth it. I believe that my film will be visually unique as it portrays my own style, characters, and fictional setting that have never been on the big screen before. Sem and Sinax originate from a fictional world that is a distant planet within the Andromeda galaxy named Dynon. The planet Dynon is orbited by two moons and hosts a complex range of biodiversity and climate. Since the planet is peppered with diverse zones of hot and cool land, it is often extremely windy and Dynonion plant life has adjusted to the stress of constant wind. Therefore, many of the planet's large foliage, such as trees and forests, grow in a bent shape. Throughout the film, particularly when Sem visits his father's gravesite, glimpses of this alien plant life can be seen. Dynon is the home to the Allderian race; a species of intelligent, sentient aliens who have developed language, art, and both a rich and complex culture. In

addition to portraying alien plant life and geography, the film will feature Allderian architecture. The film's primary setting is the interior of a massive ancestral temple that displays three grand statues. The central statue is homage to Sem I and is heavily stylized . His stone face consists of mostly squares and resembles a shape close to African tribal masks. His visage is strong, intimidating, and powerful in order to mirror the person he was while he was alive. The additional statues are two goddess statues flanking Sem I in a similar stylized manner. Their heads are mostly triangular in shape and their bodies are more curved to symbolize their femininity. The goddess statues are grasping great tridents that lead the audience's eye to the center stage where most of the film's events will unfold. They represent an aspect of Allderian folklore that states that two spiritual guides must accompany the deceased to the afterlife. Since the Allderian people have their own unique mythologies to guide their personal lives, I felt it important to hint that these mythological ties weave together to create a much larger, richer world.

I want my audience to see that absolutely nothing in this short film is random or arbitrary. Every detail and scene is crafted with purpose. These factors are what will make my film unique. By using my style and artistic voice, I can give my audience something new to experience. No one has ever stepped foot on Dynon. The interior of the temple is the audience's first glimpse into this fictional world; therefore its presence will be massive and grandiose. All three temple statues will be illuminated by Dynon's two full moons, giving a chilling blue light to the scene. Two ceremonial fires flicker at the base of the goddess statue bases, breaking up the moonlight and introducing a warmer light source to play with the cooler values. While not a nocturnal race, Allderians believe that the night carries a mystical element, especially when both moons are full

simultaneously - a rare event considering they have different orbits. All of these elements set the stage for an event of ritualistic and spiritual significance.

In addition to the uniqueness of the film's setting, the characters are unique in their own right. Sem and Sinax are extraterrestrial lifeforms and do not conform to the standard human characters typically seen in student films. All Alderians walk their toes much like cats. Their footwear is specially designed to fit their unique stature, and this fashion sense is present in the film. They have large and expressive ears that give their dialogue additional emotion. These ears are often heavily decorated with either rings or piercings, as with the case of Sinax. She wears two large and heavy gold plates that dangle from her earlobes, and due to the years of carrying the additional weight her earlobes have begun to stretch. This influence of how a fictional culture can inspire overall character design is central to my film and my overall work as an artist. Characters are not created in a vacuum, and must be influenced by the world that they live in.

I hope to also submit my finished film to various film festivals including; Indy Film Fest, Gen Con Film Festival, Blackbird Film Festival, and many others. It is my hope that my film will reach audiences and affect them in a special way. I want my film to have a life of its own.

In conclusion, *Rite* will give the audience a diverse taste of this alien life and present a visually unique, rich, and engaging world. It is my ultimate hope that *Rite* can be used as a teaching tool for individuals who have experienced a death of a loved one. *Rite* will show that there is hope and healing beyond the darkness.

EXHIBITION STATEMENT

My short film *Rite* is a reflection of the emotional journey I experienced when my father passed away. It focuses on two characters that represent two different stages of emotion in my life: the young child who just lost a parent, and the wise adult who is coping with that loss. These characters are presented as a mother and son, of the fictional alien race of Allderians who inhabit the planet Dynon. Their planet is situated in the Andromeda galaxy and features a diverse biosystem similar to our own. As sentient beings, they have developed a post-tribal society with grand architecture that reflects their complex spiritual nature. *Rite* touches on these aspects by inviting us into the world of Dynon and seating us directly inside an Allderian ancestral temple. The stage is set for our young hero, Sem II, to accept his deceased father's position as chief. Unable to handle such a momentous task at such a young age, Sem II acts on his hurt from the loss of his father and abandons his responsibility. Standing as an arbiter between himself and his grief, Sem's mother Sinax must bring herself and her son together. As a film, *Rite* explores the concepts of loss, grief, and ultimately moving on after a loved one has passed.

REVIEW OF INFLUENCES

The development of *Rite* has been inspired by the art direction of various media including, television and film. Nothing is created in a vacuum, and my film is no exception. One of the most substantial influences of my film has been Disney's *The Lion King*. It has always been and my favorite animated film and thus a central building block to the stories I craft. *The Lion King* presents a young boy of royal lineage who loses his father, runs away, and then must return to face his ultimate fear - the responsibility of adulthood. I have always been inspired by the deep message of this movie, especially after my father passed away in September of 2005.

In the movie, Simba reunites with his deceased father Mufasa as a spirit (Fig.2). Mufasa appears to the young lion in a heavenly nexus of light and celestial dust, referring to his transcended nature . This scene has a profound impact on me today. In this moment, I feel deeply connected to Simba and can imagine myself in his shoes. Simba is overcome with emotion at the sight of his angelic father, and urges him that he cannot possibly return to accept the mantle of leading his pride. Mufasa sternly reminds Simba to “remember who you are,” and that, “you are my son, and the one true King,” As Mufasa's ghost returns to the heavens, Simba chases his image shouting, “Don't leave me! Father! ...Don't leave me...” Mufasa's deep words echo across the dark savanna as Simba finally gives up chase, “*remember...*”²

The exchange between Simba and Mufasa is profoundly raw. Mufasa wishes to see his son be strong and carry on his birthright, but Simba chases the image of his father's spirit as it rolls back into the clouds. It is then where there is a moment between hopelessness and despair that a new light is found, but it exists only for a second. Thankfully, Simba recognizes this moment. His companion Rafiki then reminds him (after comically whacking him on the head

² The Lion King. Directed by Roger Allers and Rob Minkoff. By Irene Mecchi and Jonathan Roberts. Performed by Matthew Broderick, Jeremy Irons, James Earl Jones. USA: Disney, 1994. DVD.

with a stick) that “Yes, the past can hurt. But the way I see it. You can either run from it. Or learn from it.” Finally, it dawns on Simba that he must return to the Pridelands to secure his birthright, his future, and what is rightfully his. In this moment it dawned on me that a happy future is also my personal birthright and what is rightfully mine. Even if it means carrying on without someone who was fundamentally a part of me. As Simba runs in the direction of the Pridelands, drums pound and the music lifts in celebration. I feel this score resonates with me on a level that I can’t quite describe, but I feel as if the music is cheering me on as it is Simba, urging us to both chase our future.³

The Lion King is close to my heart. It is epic, emotional, and above all, deeply powerful. The concept of spirits manifesting is very clear in *Rite*, as Sem’s father (Sem I) appears several times as a blue dragonfly shaped spirit. While he does not manifest as a celestial image like Mufasa, Sem I is still present in a more subtle way. He is watching over his son’s ceremony above his statue, and is present once again as his son grieves over his gravesite. At the end of the film, Sem finally returns to his people and accepts adulthood. Upon this achievement many blue dragonfly spirits flock towards him, signaling that not only his father is with him, but the ancestors of the past are with him as well.

Sem’s relationship is reflective of the spiritual relationship Simba has with Mufasa. By that same note, *Rite* uses the appearance of spirits as a motif of guidance and closure. They tell us that our loved ones are still present in some sense and in some form. In Allderian society, the glowing blue dragonflies (called “spirit flies”,) are believed to be the embodiment of the soul. They are containers in which spirits move and manifest themselves in the physical realm. Unlike Mufasa, who manifests as himself in “The Lion King,” the deceased Sem I manifests in a much

³ John, Elton, Tim Rice, and Hans Zimmer, writers. "Remember". In *The Lion King Original Motion Picture Soundtrack: Original Songs*. Walt Disney Records, 1994.

more subtle way. I felt this decision would resonate more realistically. During its first few conceptions, *Rite* featured Sem I returning to the world of flesh as a full ghostly figure who saves the day. Unfortunately, this is not reality. Once our loved ones are gone, they no longer manifest in our world. It is ultimately up to us to make the decision to endure life without them, and the final film fully reflects this philosophy.

In addition to its concepts of loss and healing, *Rite* is inspired by the artistic direction of the popular television series *Steven Universe*. *Steven Universe* has rich backgrounds with popping colors, clear shape language, and a simplified style (Fig.3.). When designing the Allderian Ancestral Temple, I looked at many background concepts from *Steven Universe*, including concepts of the Crystal Gem Temple (Fig.4). The temple's design is easily read from a distance and has a clear silhouette. Similarly, the interior of the Allderian temple bares three statues that are clear in silhouette and easy to distinguish. In addition, the moonlit planes behind Sem I's statue are clearly inspired of the stylized background concepts from *Steven Universe*. The pale moonlight layers are overlaid on a rich blue and purple night sky with simplified stars blinking in the distance. Dynon's two moons loom over the ceremony - a rare and special occasion, as the two moons have a separate orbit and only synchronize once in a century.

Steven Universe also deals with the motif of a child losing a parent and then dealing with the consequences of that loss. The show's primary protagonist, Steven, grows up without his mother, Rose Quartz. As Steven matures, he comes to terms with the fact that his mother is an alien belonging to an extraterrestrial race of sentient gemstones. Her past is riddled in mystery. Soon enough, Steven must accept that his mother was not what she appeared to be and must find a way to confront her painful absence. While Steven's life is rich and colorful, he still possesses emptiness within him. The show acknowledges his pain and isn't afraid to show it full force

through scenes of Steven visiting memorials to his mother or by crying on screen. An excellent example of this is the episode “Storm in the Room”.⁴ In it, Steven visits his mother’s room inside the Crystal Gem Temple. To better understand this situation, it must first be explained that Rose’s “room” is a pocket dimension inside of the Temple and can create manifestations of objects, places, and even people based on Steven’s desires. The room heeds Steven’s desire to spend time with his mother, and creates a replica of her. (Fig.5). The replica has Rose’s personality and charm, but when Steven attempts to take a selfie with her she bares no reflection (Fig.6). He becomes upset with this replica and confronts it, causing the room to react violently. Storm clouds swirl around them and lightning flashes as Steven cries out to his mother’s manifestation, “I thought you never wanted to hurt anyone...but you hurt *everyone!*” (Fig .7).

This piece of dialogue resonates powerfully with me. While it was Rose’s intention to pass on her gemstone to Steven (and therefore instigating her own “death”) she never meant for Steven to suffer as a result of her passing.⁵ It is only now, through this heartfelt episode, that I understand it was very much the same situation with my father. While Rose’s death may not mirror my own father’s, the hard reality of dealing with what he left behind is tangible. The storm continues to grow in strength until Steven is blown back by a sudden force. He struggles to hold his ground. His anger and pain is amplified by the thunder, rain, and wind that surround him. He calls his mother’s manifestation and “liar” and blames it for everything Rose damaged while she was still living. Eventually, he begins to calm and the manifestation floats down to embrace him (Fig.8).

⁴ Howard, Collin, and Jeff Lui, writers. "Storm in the Room." In *Steven Universe*, directed by Ki-Yong Bae, Jin-Hee Park, Ricky Cometa, and Joe Johnson. Cartoon Network. February 17, 2017.

⁵ Howard, Collin, and Jeff Lui, writers. "Storm in the Room."

Finally, head bowed Steven states, "...now I have to deal with what you left behind.". Rose's manifestation reassures him that everything the real Rose said to him was the truth, and that she never meant to hurt him. As he returns its embrace, tears fall from his eyes. The rain falls on them, but begins to clear. Finally, the manifestation of Rose dissipates into a pink cloud and leaves Steven to face the reality of his pain. Steven's tears pour from his eyes and trickle down his face (Fig .9). This is especially powerful because it shows that a young man is emotionally reeling from a painful loss, and is vulnerable in the wake of its consequences. As the creator of *Rite*, it is important for me to show Sem at his weakest.

Taking inspiration from Steven, Sem will show the audience what he is actually feeling inside by shedding tears. In the film, there is a scene where Sem visits his father's memorial site. He has just confronted his mother and is in enormous pain. His anger and despair battle inside of him as he clenches his fist and tries to force back the tears. They come anyway. Angry, confused, and sad, Sem forcibly wipes the tears away with balled fists of fury. This action results in his tribal face paint being smeared all over his face. It is a symbol for the mess he unintentionally made, and how acting out in anger ultimately makes the situation worse for everyone involved. Little does he know that his mother is on her way to find him, and present him with the choice to either return to the temple and reclaim what is rightfully his, or continue to wallow in despair.

Another piece of media *Rite* takes inspiration from is an animated short from the Netherlands titled *Father and Daughter*.⁶ I distinctly remember running into this film by accident while studying back at Bowling Green State University. During this time, my emotions were difficult to manage and I was in therapy for the academic year. While viewing this film, I can recall an overwhelming sense of loss and hurt. The film's message was very clear; in *Father and*

⁶ Father and Daughter. Directed by Michael De Wit Dudok and Williem Thijssen. Produced by Claire Jennings. 2000. <http://www.acmefilmworks.com>.

Daughter, a little girl rides a bike with her father. They stop at a hillside where he gets into a small boat and rows away, leaving her. This action is very clearly a symbol of his death (Figure.10). After he passes on, his daughter is left to live her life. She continues to ride her bike as she ages and always stops at the spot of his death, symbolizing a deep longing within her. As she reaches old age, she stops once more at the place of his departure. The ocean where he once took the boat is now a dried up field. She enters the field and finds the wreckage of her father's boat. She lies within it, and then wakes up a young woman. This scene may symbolize her death and "waking" up in the afterlife. As she sits up to examine her surroundings, she notices her father standing there. She runs to him, and as she does, she turns into a little girl again (Figure. 11). This film has a powerful and deep message. It tells us that we will see our loved ones on the other side, and that they are not truly gone.⁷ *Rite* takes a similar approach and speaks a message of hope and healing. While the film does not promote the idea of reuniting with a physical embodiment of a deceased loved one, it is my hope that it offers comfort from showing the audience that there may be, indeed, something beyond our world where are loved ones are watching over us from the other side.

The process of grief is well researched, and in my journey to better understand my own grief and ultimately what *Rite* would become, I found numerous scholarly articles detailing the grief process and how individuals deal with loss. In the article *Coping with Loss*, author Colin Murray Parkes details a phenomenon known as "avoidance of grief", in which individuals are afraid to confront their emotions.⁸ The author states that, "they may avoid it because they fear

⁷ Father and Daughter. Directed by Michael De Wit Dudok and Williem Thijssen.

⁸ Parkes, Colin Murray, Frances Sheldon Parkes, and Colin Murray Parkes. "Reviews." *Bereavement Care* 10, no. 3 (1991): 35-36. doi:10.1080/02682629108657277.

the consequences if they should express it;" indeed, these "consequences" can often be the raw emotions they fear, or the outlash they may experience from other individuals by confronting those raw emotions. Since Sem is a young teenager, he is unable to process his emotions in a mature fashion, thus he reacts with anger. This expression manifests itself through his rejection of his father's helmet; once bestowed this sacred object, Sem throws it off of his head in anger. His rage is a part of his grief, not because he is a bad child, but because it is simply the only way he understands how to express it. In Linda Goldman's book, *Life & Loss: A Guide to help grieving children*, she explains that, "...Children often feel angry about the death or illness of a loved one. Losses such as divorce, moving or the death of a pet or people certainly provoke anger. Often feeling they have no control over what has happened, kids may project their angry feelings onto the person or thing that's gone, doctors, teachers, parents, siblings, or god,".⁹ With my film, Sem's anger is very clear because he is a reflection of my own emotional self while dealing with the recent loss of a parent. In my experience, anger is the most common emotion felt after such an extreme loss. Young children who experience the death of a parent feel robbed and cheated. The passing feels wrong and unfair, thus generating a deep sense of rage. These emotions can be expressed at anyone or anything, but above all, they manifest as a quiet fury that is hard to deal with and contain.

By that same token, Jessica Koblenz states in her article *Growing from Grief: Qualitative Experiences of Parental Loss* that, "...grieving children are more likely to experience symptoms

⁹ Goldman, Linda. *Life & Loss: A Guide to Help Grieving Children. Second Edition*. Accelerated Development, 2000.

¹⁰ Koblenz, Jessica. "Growing from Grief." *OMEGA - Journal of Death and Dying* 73, no. 3 (2015): 203-30. doi:10.1177/0030222815576123.

of depression and anxiety compared with their non-grieving peers,”¹⁰. Indeed, we can easily see maladaptive tendencies in Sem as he tries to cope with the pain of his loss and the pressure of the adult responsibilities put on him by his mother. In the film, this is present mostly in his body language. For example, he will often scowl and cross his arms. His large ears will slide back in irritation, and he will deliberately try to avoid the affectionate touch of his mother.

In addition, Sinax, Sem’s mother, is also struggling with the hardships of being a single parent to an emotionally damaged teenager. In the book *Children and Grief: When a Parent Dies*, author J. William Worden explains this delicate circumstance, “The child’s adjustment to the death is inextricably intertwined with the way in which the family, and especially the surviving parent, responds to the loss. How does the surviving parent cope with becoming a single parent? In what ways does the child’s relationship with the surviving parent affect the way in which the two together negotiate the reality of life without the deceased parent?”¹¹ This struggle is very much clear in Sinax as she tries to balance the responsibilities of raising her grieving son while managing her own pain.

While Sem is indeed hurting deeply, he is not alone. Sinax has also lost a husband and co-parent and a great leader to her community. The pressures of preserving his legacy through their son are chipping away at her ability to heal and parent Sem from a place of love. Worden also explains, “Parents felt more than just sadness; they felt the absence of their spouse as well”. Thus, Sinax is not only feeling the loss of her husband, but the loss of her child’s father. This makes her situation difficult, and her inability to parent Sem from a place of affection and clarity has become evident through her consistent pressuring of him to take on adult responsibilities. To add to Worden’s point of the single parent facing issues in addition to a bereaved child, Koblenz

¹¹ Worden, William J. *Children and grief: when a parent dies*. New York: Guilford, 2002.

states that, "...some studies notes that a determining variable for positive outcome in parentally bereaved children is the relationship maintained with the surviving parent, as he or she can be a role model in teaching the child how to grieve,"¹² As it is clear in the film, Sinax is not a perfect role model for her son's healing journey even if her heart is in the right place. This affects both mother and son by creating palpable tension between them. During the ceremony, Sem is visually uncomfortable around his mother and finds her presence an annoyance. He often rolls his eyes or scoffs silently to himself, while Sinax is oblivious to his discomfort and sincerely wants her son to move on. In Ivana Dijanic's article, the author addresses how growing tensions for the bereaved mother often result in anger between her and her child.¹³ Not only is this anger visually clear between Sem and Sinax, it is palpable. The air in the Ancestral Temple is thick with it, and even the two assisting priests are tense when around mother and son. The audience of Allderian villagers baring witness to the scene often react with shock at their attitudes towards each other, reflecting the very real consequence of anger between the surviving parent and child.

¹² Koblenz, Jessica. "Growing from Grief." *OMEGA - Journal of Death and Dying* 73, no. 3 (2015): 203-30. doi:10.1177/0030222815576123

¹³ Dijanic, Ivana. "Growing Up in a Single-Parent Family and Anger in Adulthood." *Journal of Loss and Trauma* 21, no. 4 (2014): 259-64. doi:10.1080/15325024.2013.851442.

CONCLUSION

Rite shows us these raw emotions and how hard they are to overcome. When Sem is pressured by his mother, he acts out in anger. When he reaches his father's memorial site, he is overwhelmed with sorrow. These scenes showcase that grief impasses not one, but several emotional states. However, it is not impossible to work through these emotions and Sem takes the first big step by deciding to face his grief head on. He cannot truly move on until he has chosen not to avoid his grief and instead learn to mature and grow with it.

Overall, *Rite* is a deeply personal project. While the project as a whole gathers inspiration from various media like *The Lion King*, *Coco*, *Steven Universe* and *Father & Daughter*, it is my hope that I can create an original work. I want *Rite* to inspire and touch individuals who have lost loved ones and reassure them that those loved one's spirits can watch over us from the other side.

LIST OF IMAGES



Figure 1. *Coco*, Directed by. Pixar Animation Studios. 2017, Digital Image. From: Daddy's Grounded.com, https://i1.wp.com/daddysgrounded.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/CoCo_Hero.jpg?resize=720%2C340&ssl=1 / (accessed October 7, 2018).



Figure 2. *The Lion King*. Disney Animation Studios. Digital Image. From: Fanpop.com, <http://images5.fanpop.com/image/photos/31400000/Mufasa-s-ghost-the-lion-king-31491394-500-293.jpg> / (accessed March 10 , 2018).

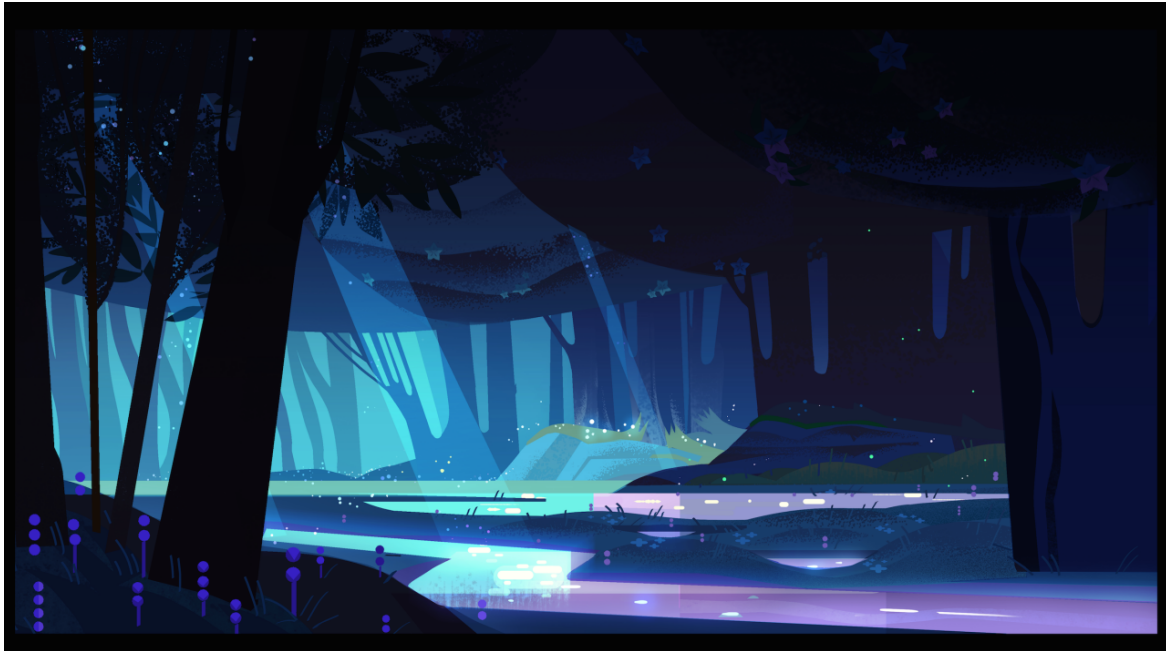


Figure.3. “Steven Universe”. Created by Rebecca Sugar. Cartoon Network Studios. 2016, Digital Image. From: Steven Universe - Wiki, http://steven-universe.wikia.com/wiki/File:The_Answer_Background_Forest.png / (accessed March 10, 2018).



Figure 4. “Steven Universe”. Created by Rebecca Sugar. Cartoon Network Studios. 2016, Digital Image. From: Steven Universe - Wiki: http://steven-universe.wikia.com/wiki/Crystal_Temple / (accessed October 10, 2018).



Figure 5. "Steven Universe". Created by Rebecca Sugar. Cartoon Network Studios. 2016, Digital Image. From, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jqxq2hY4Xes> (accessed October 9th, 2018).



Figure 6. "Steven Universe". Created by Rebecca Sugar. Cartoon Network Studios. 2016, Digital Image. From, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jqxq2hY4Xes> (accessed October 9th, 2018).



Figure 7. "Steven Universe". Created by Rebecca Sugar. Cartoon Network Studios. 2016, Digital Image. From, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jqxq2hY4Xes> (accessed October 9th, 2018).



Figure. 8. “Steven Universe”. Created by Rebecca Sugar. Cartoon Network Studios. 2016, Digital Image. From, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jqxq2hY4Xes> (accessed October 9th, 2018).



Figure.9. “Steven Universe”. Created by Rebecca Sugar. Cartoon Network Studios. 2016, Digital Image. From, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jqxq2hY4Xes> (accessed October 9th, 2018).



Figure 10 . *Father and Daughter*. Directed by Michael Dudok de Wit. Acme Filmworks. 2000, Digital Image. From: Festival of Amature Animated Film, <https://faaf.tv/img/film/1176/cd5001dbbe0da6b1e42221aa17deb30el.jpg> (accessed Febuary 17, 2018).



Figure.11. *Father and Daughter*. Directed by Michael Dudok de Wit. Acme Filmworks. 2000, Digital Image. From: Vimeo, <https://vimeo.com/140280083> (accessed February 2017).

IMAGES FROM "RITE"

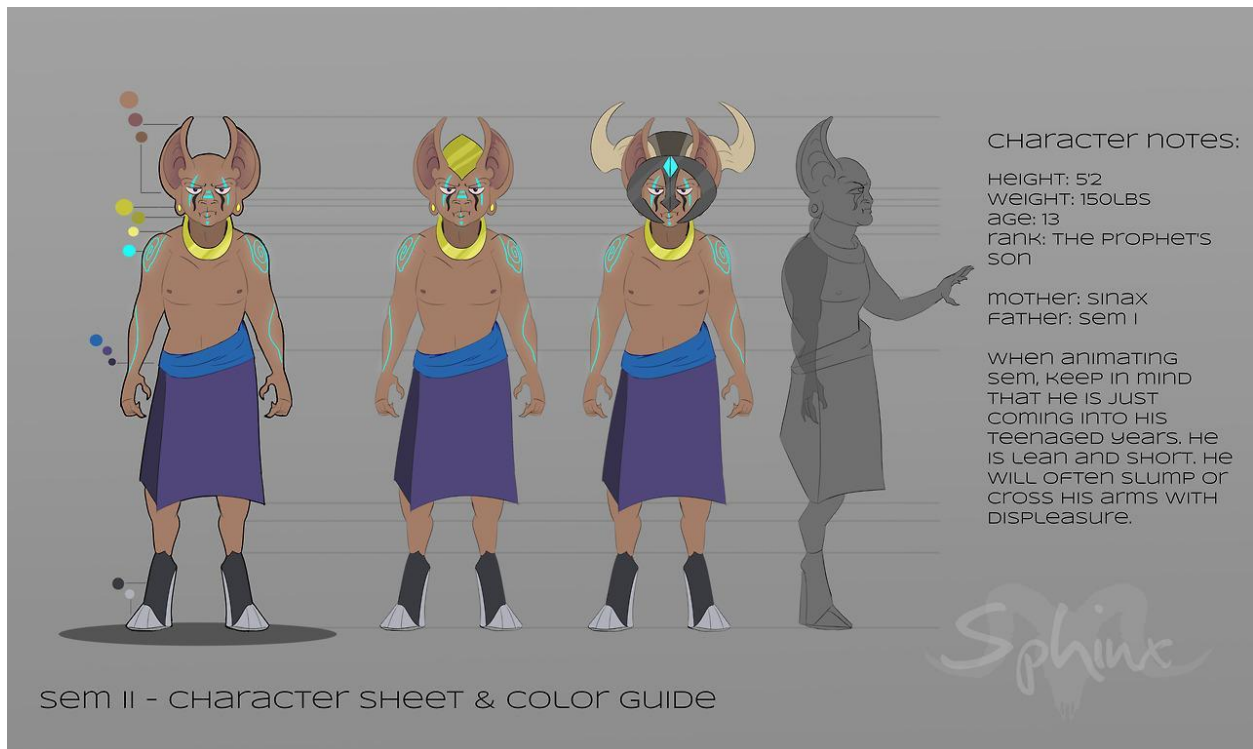


Figure 12.

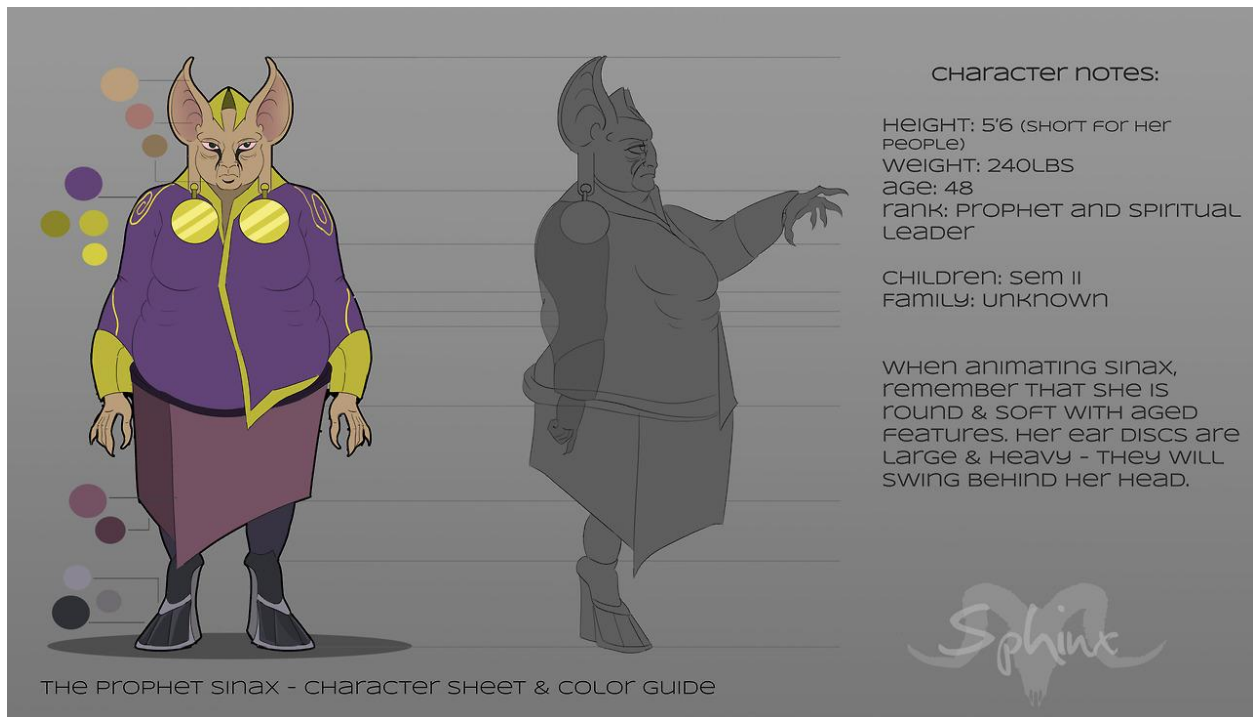


Figure 13.



Figure 14.



Figure 15.



Figure 16.



Figure 17.



Figure 18.



Figure 19.



Figure 20.

DESCRIPTION OF IMAGES

Figure 1. Miguel from *Coco* being guided through the Land of The Dead by his deceased ancestors.

Figure 2. *The Lion King's* Mufasa appearing before Simba as a celestial image in the heavens.

Figure 3. Background illustration for “The Answer”, an episode of the hit animated television series *Steven Universe*.

Figure 4. Background illustration of The Crystal Gem Temple from *Steven Universe*.

Figure 5. Steven spending time with the manifestation of his deceased mother, Rose Quartz.

Figure 6. Steven realizing that the manifestation of Rose Quartz bares no reflection in his phone.

Figure 7. Rose Quartz’s manifestation reacting violently to Steven’s anger.

Figure 8. Steven being embraced by Rose Quartz’s manifestation as the storm finally begins to clear.

Figure 9. Steven looking on forlornly as Rose Quartz’s manifestation evaporates into pink clouds.

Figure 10. A father climbs onboard a boat to symbolize his death in *Father and Daughter*.

Figure 11. Father and daughter are reunited in the afterlife.

Figure 12. Sem II character sheet and concept art.

Figure 13. The Prophet Sinax character sheet and concept art.

Figure 14. Main view of the Alderian Ancestral Temple. Dynon’s twin moons ablaze with full, cool light.

Figure 15. “Graveyard of fallen Warriors” - Sem I’s memorial site.

Figure 16. Sem II mourning before his father’s memorial site.

Figure 17. Sem's emotional backdown in front of his mother after she confronts him at the gravesite.

Figure 18. Sinax attempting her best to comfort her son. She mentions that the spirits of their ancestors are always watching.

Figure 19. A blue "spirit fly" appearing in the foreground of the scene, signaling that an ancestral spirit may be watching over the ceremony.

Figure 20. The village celebrates as Sem accepts adulthood, and the temple is swarmed by spirit flies.

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